

Welcome to our January 2024 Newsletter

West Hill is a lovely place to live! Developers seem to agree.

It really feels like the village is under siege from new planning applications. If all the outstanding applications are approved, West Hill could get **100 additional homes**. The Parish Council feels this would adversely impact on the character of the village, not to mention the additional strain on health services and schools which are already unable to cope. Nevertheless, we have seen that development can be challenged where the adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits and there is an example in this newsletter of a planning appeal being dismissed on this basis.

In this issue:

- *Introducing our new Councillors*
- *No Precept increase again!*
- *100 new homes in West Hill?*
- *Neighbourhood Plan news*
- *Morrisons + West Hill*
- *Village Emergency Plan*

WHPC has been working hard to ensure the views of residents are represented and it is encouraging to see residents themselves getting involved, both by attending WHPC meetings to give their views and by submitting comments directly to the East Devon District Council planning team.



Please consider commenting on all major planning applications, whether or not you live near the proposed sites. See pages 4 and 5 for more details on how to respond to applications. *Have your say - don't leave it to someone else!*

Are you interested in planning + West Hill? The Parish Council needs you! The Council now has two vacancies as Cllr Neil Bromley resigned from the Parish Council in December 2023. We were sorry to lose a valued member of our team but understand that it can be difficult to balance the demands of running a business, looking after a family and being a Councillor. We wish Neil well and thank him for his service to West Hill.

Read on to find out about our meeting with Morrisons and an Emergency Plan for West Hill!

Cllr Alison Carr, WHPC Chairman

Dates for your diary

Tuesday 6th February + Tuesday 5th March

Council meeting 7.30pm, Village Hall

Please come along. Parish Council meetings are open to the public and always include an opportunity for members of the public to speak.

Thursday 18th April

Annual Parish Meeting at Village Hall

This is a community meeting. Details will be published on our website and noticeboards in March/April.

Would you like to be added to our email mailing list?

We will only use your email address (or 'data') to send you updates such as agendas. We will not give your information to anyone else without asking you first.

If you wish to join our mailing list: Please email clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk Details of our Privacy Policy are available on our website www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Thank you for your support!



New Council and Councillors

Since the local elections in May 2023, WHPC has not had a full complement of seven Councillors. At times WHPC has struggled to reach a quorum (of three Cllrs) without which a meeting cannot be held. Clearly this impacts the Council's ability to do more than just the basic "business as usual": meeting financial and governance obligations, and commenting on planning applications, to name but a few. WHPC Councillors are happy to discuss local issues. Their contact details are available on the WHPC website and noticeboard outside Morrisons.

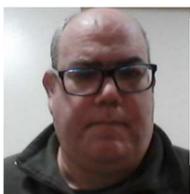
Meet the our Councillor team

Cllr Alison Carr (Chairman) Alison has been a WHPC Councillor since 2019 and has lived in West Hill for over 10 years. She is interested in climate change and the natural environment.



Cllr Francis Pullman (Vice Chairman): Francis, now retired, spent most of his working life in the aviation industry and was Chief Executive at various large airlines and at one point was Chief Executive of Luton Airport. He joined the Parish Council to have an active role in the community.

Cllr Andrew Gorton: Andrew has wide-ranging private and public sector experience in the field of telecommunications: running his own business and working for small and large organisations.. He has lived in West Hill for six years.



Cllr Trevor Ingram: Trevor is a busy stay at home dad with daughters at primary and secondary school in Ottery. He is a member of the Ottery Silver Band and plays solo cornet. He joined the Council to be part of the local community.

Cllr Stanley Paulo: Stanley spent his professional life working in Actuarial Finance, corporate and investments. Now retired, he has lived in West Hill for almost seven years.



There are currently two Councillor vacancies. We know there are many residents who could make a valuable contribution to our work. Would you consider joining us?.....



West Hill Parish Council needs you!

Please consider joining our team of Councillors and help us be a voice for the community. The Parish Council has the ability to negotiate with and influence those other organisations that do make decisions that affect us all, such as East Devon District Council and Devon County Council. These organisations know that a Parish Council gives the best reflection of how a community feels about something. "Co-option" onto the Council is very straightforward.

We can provide information on the role of a Councillor but it's probably best to attend a Council meeting or to chat with a Councillor. Council meetings are open to the public and are held at 7.30pm at the Village Hall on the first Tuesday of the month.

For more information

Please check the Council's website or contact our Parish Clerk, Anne Oliver for further details: clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk

Who can be a Parish Councillor? You must

- be a UK or commonwealth citizen,
- be a least 18 years old.
- be on the electoral register of the parish, or;
- during the previous 12 months have worked in the parish
- or, for the whole of the previous 12 months lived in the parish or within three miles of the parish boundary.

The new Council wants to build on the achievements of previous Councils, particularly strengthening ties with community organisations and engaging more with residents. Our strapline is Working with the community to maintain and enhance West Hill's special character and it encapsulates what WHPC is about.

There are many activities that could be classed as “business as usual”, such as finance, governance, responding as a consultee to planning applications and keeping residents informed about things that affect them. As well as these, Councillors would like to do more to improve life for residents in West Hill.

Our work is underpinned by six core aspirations:

- Maintain and enhance the built environment for present and future generations
- Maintain and enhance the natural environment for present and future generations
- Improve safety, including road safety, by working with residents and relevant agencies
- Maintain and develop infrastructure and key facilities and other services that enhance the quality of life in the village
- Support and engage with all sectors of our community
- Provide effective, efficient and accountable local government for the Parish.

We are aware of developments in East Devon and beyond which will have a profound and lasting effect on West Hill. Two in particular are the draft East Devon Local Plan (EDLP) and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Councillors have agreed that West Hill needs a new Neighbourhood Plan to help shape future development in our community.

We are working on developing an Emergency Plan and you can read more about this later in this newsletter.

Work must continue on the proposed pedestrian access path to the village hall from West Hill Road and Councillors are committed to working with Village Hall Trustees to bring this to a successful conclusion.

Other potential projects include improvements to the playpark and road safety. These plans are contingent upon having enough Councillors to carry them out and therefore may be subject to change.

Any major new projects involving substantial expenditure would be subject to resident consultation.



2024-2025 Council Budget & Precept

At the WHPC meeting on 3rd January 2024, Councillors formally voted to leave the Parish precept unchanged for the fourth year running at £56,875. This represents a Council Tax band D equivalent of £48.95 (subject to confirmation of the tax base). There will be a small shortfall against the agreed 2024-25 budget, £57,417, which Councillors agreed to fund from reserves, and some project costs will be funded from Section 106 grants or Community Infrastructure Levy as appropriate. Councillors were mindful of the cost of living and other inflationary pressures on residents.

A parish council Precept is a tax that parish councils charge their local electors to meet their budget requirements. Parish Councils do not receive any direct funding from central government and rely on their Precept plus any other income they generate. The Parish Council Precept is part of the Council Tax and is collected from local electors via their Council Tax payments.

How does West Hill compare to other Parish/Town Councils?

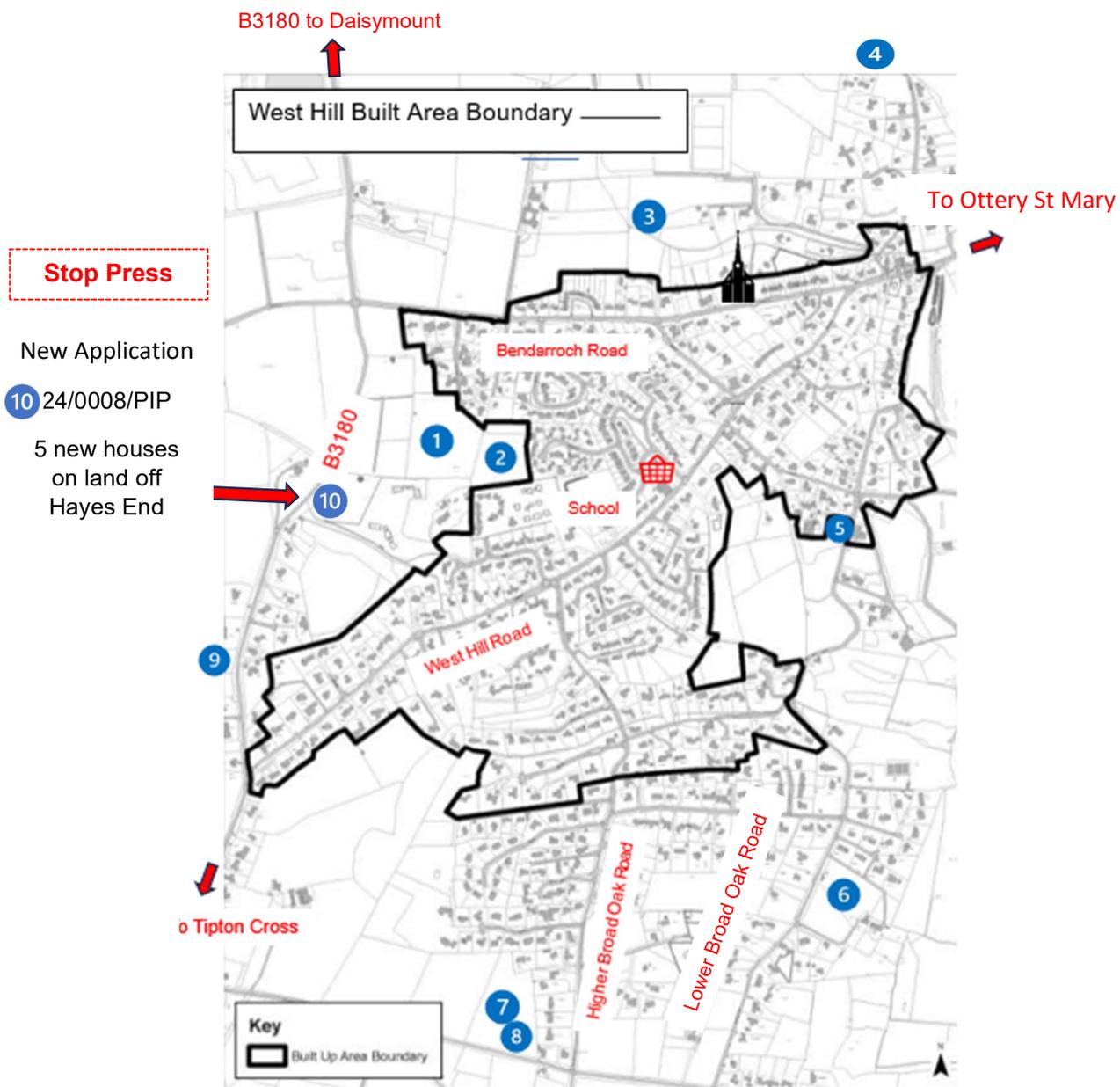
The precept is virtually the only source of income for WHPC and comes from East Devon District Council via the Council Tax collected from residents. The average Band D Parish Precept in England for 2023-24 was £79.35 (Source: Dept. for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities). In Ottery St Mary it was £88.44.

Major Planning Applications in/near West Hill

During 2023 West Hill experienced a surge of planning applications and WHPC anticipates that this may continue in 2024. 2023 saw several “Major” applications for 5 or more houses. Developers appear to be seeking to take advantage of East Devon’s inability to demonstrate a 5 Year housing supply. In planning terms this “tilts the balance” in favour of approval for the application. If all the outstanding applications are approved (and we hope they are not), West Hill could get 100 additional homes resulting in additional traffic and further strain on local services.

The Parish Council needs your support. Despite the lack of 5 Year Housing Supply in East Devon, applications for new dwellings in West Hill have been refused by EDDC and the Planning Inspectorate. The Parish Council encourages the West Hill Community to make its views heard. Please submit your comments on planning applications directly to EDDC as they are the decision makers. Please also share your views with the Parish Council at a Council meeting or via email. Please see the next page for where to find details of applications and how to submit your comments.

The map below shows 2021-2023 planning applications for sites outside the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB). Not shown on the map is application 21/1688/MFUL for the development of Roadside Services at Daisymount junction which, if approved, may impact on the local area.



Applications - In progress- Awaiting EDDC Decision

- 1 **23/1143/MFUL** 34 new dwellings on Land to the South of Windmill Lane: This application, by Strongvox, has been in progress since May 2023. A total of 193 documents accompany the application reflecting the many amendments since May 2023. The site lies outside the current BUAB but is a preferred site in the EDDC Emerging Local Plan. WHPC continues to object to the development.
- 5 **23/2535/PIP** 2 new dwellings on Land at Elsdon House, Elsdon Lane: WHPC objected and the EDDC decision is not yet known.
- 6 **23/2612/OUT** 5 new dwellings Land At Lower Broad Oak Road: This site is outside the BUAB and is listed as a Valued View in the West Hill and Ottery St Mary Neighbourhood Plan. Councillors strongly objected to this at the WHPC meeting on 3rd January 2024 and there is no further news at present.
- 8 **23/2505/PIP** 2-9 new dwellings Land north of Oak Road: This site is also subject to planning application 22/2533/MOUT (see below). The Council has objected to the application,

Applications - In progress- Approved by EDDC

- 2 **23/0727/MOUT** 30 new dwelling on Land north of Eastfield: The EDDC Planning Committee approved the application. As this was an Outline application the developer, Blue Cedar, will submit a further detailed application. The Parish Council will respond to this in due course.

Applications - WHPC objected, Planning appeal submitted, EDDC would have refused

- 7 **22/2533/MOUT** 23 new dwellings on Land north of Oak Road. A Planning Appeal, submitted by the developer Morrish Homes, will be heard by public hearing. The Parish Council will speak at **hearing as this is an opportunity for West Hill residents to stand together**. Details of the Hearing: Start time **10.00 am on Wednesday 28 February 2024** at East Devon District Council, Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Industrial Estate, Honiton, EX14 1EJ.



Applications - WHPC objected, EDDC refused, Planning Appeal dismissed:

- 4 **21/2531/FUL** 1 new dwelling on Land off Toadpit Lane
- 3 **23/0325/PIP** 2 new dwellings on Land off Toadpit Lane
- 9 **20/1618/FUL** 1 new dwelling on Land to the west of B3180

Information is correct at the time of writing. Full details of each application and the Parish Council's responses are available on the EDDC website. Residents are advised to check for planning application updates under the respective reference numbers.

For more Information on Planning Applications

West Hill Planning applications are listed on our website (www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk). They are also listed on the agenda for each Council meeting which is published on the Council's website, noticeboards and website. Councillors discuss their response to applications at a Council meeting – they're open to the public. Full details of applications can be found on the EDDC website www.eastdevon.gov.uk using the relevant planning reference number, eg 23/1234/OUT.

If you wish your comments and concerns to be considered by the decision makers it's important to contact East Devon District Council as they are the decision makers. Your views can be submitted:

- via their website www.eastdevon.gov.uk
- or by email to planningcentral@eastdevon.gov.uk
- or in writing to Planning, Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Industrial Estate, Honiton EX14 1EJ

Other Planning News:



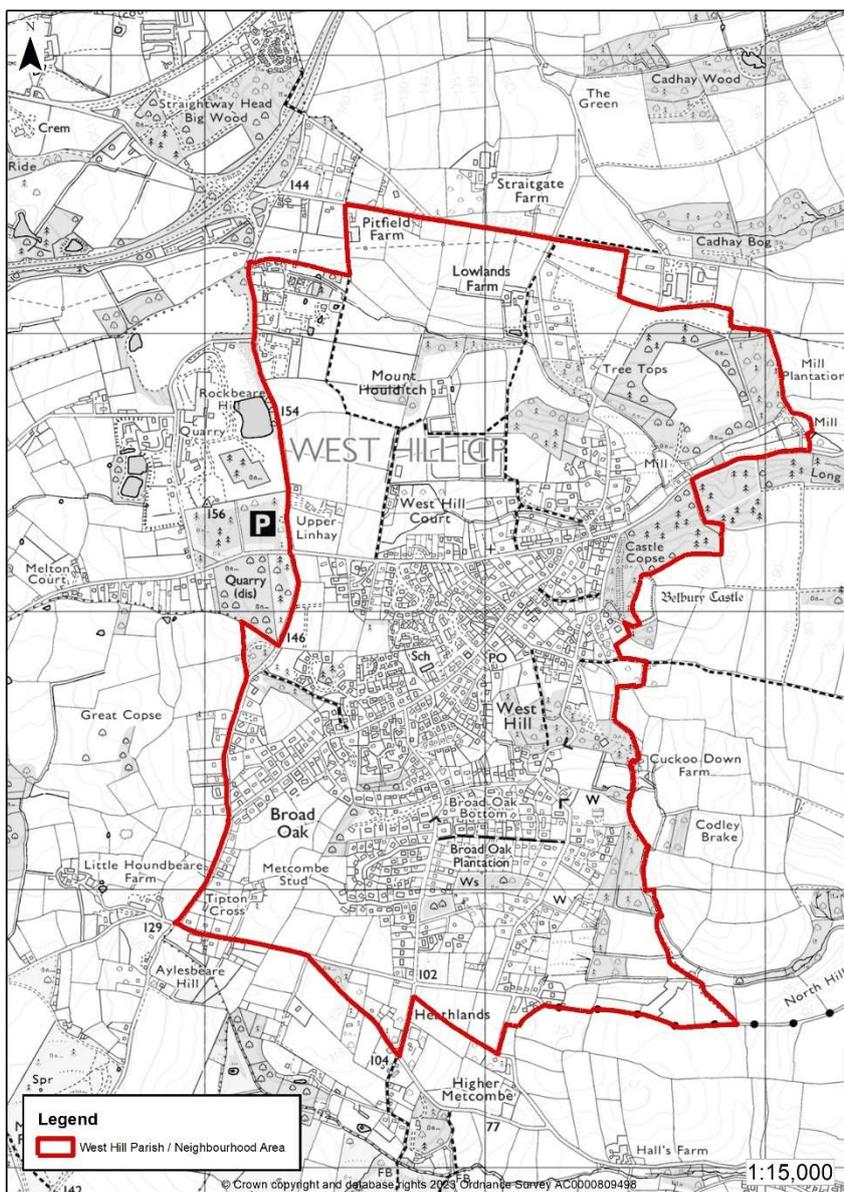
West Hill Neighbourhood Area Application Approved

An application was received in September by East Devon District Council from West Hill Parish Council for the whole of their area to be designated as a new 'Neighbourhood Area' for neighbourhood planning purposes.

Following a 6-week consultation, and consideration of the comments received, the application was approved by East Devon District Council Cabinet at its meeting on 29th November 2023. This decision (effective from 6th December 2023) has established a new Neighbourhood Area for West Hill parish, separate to the pre-existing Ottery St Mary Neighbourhood Area. Accordingly, the decision also amends the Ottery St Mary Neighbourhood Area to remove the area of West Hill from it and align it to the current parish boundary.

The designation of a Neighbourhood Area is the first formal step in the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan. The decision will therefore enable West Hill Parish Council - and Ottery St Mary Town Council - to prepare a new Neighbourhood Plan for their respective areas, should they wish to do so.

The existing joint Neighbourhood Plan for Ottery St Mary and West Hill (made in 2018) will continue to apply in both parishes until such time as it is either superseded or replaced.



The formal Decision Notice is available to view on the District Council website at www.eastdevon.gov.uk and Ottery St Mary library. The full set of documentation is also available online or can be viewed at the District Council Offices by appointment only (Call 01404 515 616 to arrange).

New Neighbourhood Plan for West Hill

Next Steps?

Development of a new Neighbourhood Plan will involve residents and volunteers will be sought to help when the time comes. Please watch the Parish Council noticeboards and website and for updates.

Morrisons Village Store

The Parish Council Chairman, the Parish Clerk and the Vice Chairman met recently with the Regional and Area Managers of Morrisons to discuss their plans and intentions for the future of the village store.

The store is obviously an important facility for the village and we considered it important to understand the intentions and commitment of the new owners to the future of the store since their acquisition last year.

We were given assurances that Morrisons corporately is committed to the local convenience store concept and the company is investing in opening new convenience stores throughout the country. The West Hill store was not a very profitable



operation when they took it over but is now performing better for Morrisons. There is no intention to reduce the range of products or the opening hours. They would be keen to hear suggestions from customers about new products that people would like to see on the shelves. We discussed the subject of fresh produce and whilst Morrisons would like a wider range of fresh produce there is a difficult balance to be achieved between the range and volume of these goods and the high wastage rate that can occur in a small convenience store when these items are not sold.

Morrisons are keen to be involved in community affairs and want to be seen as part of the community. One of several ideas they were willing to consider is re-instating a community notice board in the shop where people can place their own notices or advertisements. They will certainly be receptive to ideas that will involve them more in community events.

We also discussed the state of the site around the store and were told that their Estates Department is working on improvements. The semi-derelict building behind the store which is currently fenced off will be addressed. They have tidied up some of the hedges around the site and will continue with these improvements. As a part of this programme they are investigating how to make full and better use of some of the existing space.

We brought up a matter which has been a source of complaint from some residents and that is the home delivery of newspapers. They do recognise that there have been some problems which have resulted from both the availability of people willing to deliver the newspapers and the laws governing the employment of young people in these roles. Gone are the days when some of us were desperate to get a paper round so we could save up to buy a bicycle! They are trying their best to achieve the service standards they wish to deliver within the constraints that they have to live with.

The impression we got from meeting Martin and Richard is that Morrisons is committed to making the local store work for both Morrisons and the West Hill community and want to be seen as being a part of the community. Although they were far too polite to say it directly we do have to accept that Morrisons will only be able to keep operating the store if it is a viable business so it may be a case of “use it or lose it”. Certainly what is clear is that they are putting effort into making it work and we may be able to look forward to some new and exciting developments in the coming months.

Residents wishing to comment to Morrisons may do so via WHPC until the end of February. We will be happy to pass on your initial comments to our contacts. After that, we hope that Morrisons will have set up a “suggestion box” in the store.

Please send your comments, clearly marked Morrisons, via email to our Parish Clerk clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk. Alternatively, please complete the comments slip on the last page of the newsletter and pop it into the WHPC comments box in the Morrisons store. Please remember to include your contact information.

Emergency Planning and Community Resilience

One of our aims is to develop an Emergency Plan for West Hill. History shows that people are extremely resourceful in an emergency but these efforts will be much more effective if we plan in advance to co-ordinate these actions rather than relying on individual initiative after the emergency has occurred. The aim of the Emergency Plan is to integrate the voluntary capabilities of individuals and community organisations into a cohesive community response to speed up recovery from an emergency event.



There is a range of emergencies we need to consider. If, for example, a storm caused falling trees and power outages, with no power or telephones many people will have no heating or cooking facilities and no internet or telephone communication at a time when there is probably no mobile telephone coverage. Most of us would find it difficult to manage but for particularly vulnerable people who need regular care visits or medical treatment and are more susceptible to the cold it could be extremely serious. We therefore must develop a plan to help us respond to an emergency and minimise the disruption whilst the emergency services are doing what they are trained and equipped to do.

The first stage is **Preparation**. This includes identifying the potential threats that we need to plan for, planning mitigating actions that we can practically and realistically carry out, identifying vulnerable members of the community and the support they may need, identifying volunteers with relevant skills and knowledge who are willing to help, source access to tools and equipment and the people who have the skills to use them and developing emergency communications amongst other things. These need to be linked together into a detailed plan which must be tested regularly by carrying out exercises.

In the event of an emergency we need to **Respond** by triggering the actions defined in the Plan so we are able to inform the community of what is happening and keep them informed as circumstances change, provide support to vulnerable people, deploy skilled volunteers with specialist equipment, provide information to the emergency services and possibly run a reception centre to provide information and physical support for the community and volunteers.

After the event we need to help the community through **Recovery** by identifying the recovery needs of the community and matching these with the support available from voluntary and statutory sources.

All of this is a big task that needs help and support from the parish. Within our community we have people with useful knowledge and experience in this field and we would like to draw on this to help with the development of the plan. We will keep you informed of progress. ***This is an important project and perversely it is something that we hope we will never have to use!***



Feedback

WHPC welcomes your comments. Please email clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk. Alternatively complete this slip and pop it into the WHPC comments box in the Morrisons store. Please remember to add your contact details.

WHPC
West Hill Parish Council

Details of our Privacy Policy are available on our website www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk.